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SUBJECT: FRANCE PUBLISHES AVIATION BLACKLIST

1. (U) In response to highly publicized recent plane accidents, on August 28 the French Civil Aviation Authority (DGAC) published via internet its "blacklist" of companies that are forbidden to operate in France, as transportation minister Dominique Perben promised last week. The companies on the list are: Korea: Air Koryo, U.S.: Air Saint-Thomas, Liberia: International Air Services, Mozambique: Lineas Aer de Mozambique, and Thailand: Phuket Airlines.

2. The list may be consulted at:
<http://www.aviation-civile.gouv.fr/html/oservice/listeinternetcompaninterdites.pdf>.

3. (U) In an interview published in "Le Monde" dated August 26, Perben also said France would exercise "greater rigor" toward states that fail to meet international safety norms, and would publish a list of countries whose companies would be forbidden to operate in France. Though France intended to continue to work with norms established by ICAO, he warned that if problem states did not improve their records of inspecting aircraft and training pilots, France would add them to its blacklist and notify other states and ICAO of its findings.

4. (U) Perben also referred to complementary proposals to increase consumer confidence in airline safety, notably the "blue label" airline quality labeling scheme that his predecessor put forward in the wake of the Flash Air crash in Sharm-el-Sheikh in January 2004, and a regulation requiring tour operators to inform customers of the names of companies furnishing transport that he said would be issued later this year.

5. (U) Comment: High-profile accidents involving large numbers of French nationals, including those in Sharm-el-Sheik and Venezuela, have generated substantial media coverage and growing public concern about airline safety in France. The publication of the DGAC's blacklist is the first step in what promises to be a series of measures intended to increase public confidence in the reliability and transparency of France's air safety programs. How they will be co-ordinated with the EU's upcoming blacklist as well as the European Civil Aviation Conference's Safety Action Plan (adopted August 29) remains to be seen. End comment.
STAPLETON